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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Office of  
Public Affairs

# Selected Speeches and News Releases

October 16 - October 24, 1991

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# Remarks

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

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Prepared for delivery by Secretary of Agriculture, Edward Madigan, to the Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council, Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 17.

Thank you for that wonderful introduction. I'm happy to be here in Minnesota. It's my first visit to the Gopher State since becoming Secretary of Agriculture.

As many of you know, I've just returned from a nine-day presidential mission to the Soviet Union. It was my first trip to that country. Many of you know Dr. Richard Crowder, who heads our international and commodity programs.

Dick was a vice president of The Pillsbury Co. here in Minneapolis before he joined the Department in 1989. He's been to the Soviet Union three times since May. He's so familiar over there that when we stepped off the plane, one of the Soviet ministers joked that he must be the new First Deputy of Food.

I have a number of topics to cover tonight, especially on the Soviet Union and what's ahead. But before I do that, let me take a few minutes to touch on some concerns closer to home, here in Minnesota and across the Upper Midwest.

One of those is dairy—and I know many of you here tonight are dairy farmers or are tied to the dairy business. Times have been hard. Prices dropped sharply and a little more suddenly than any of us expected. Last spring it seemed as if the dairy farm was a place where it was always Monday.

The problem was supply and demand. In the last half of 1990, production rose 4 percent while consumption was flat.

This year, the trend is reversed. Milk production this summer and fall declined by 1 percent while consumption rose. If trends hold, our experts think production in the second half of 1991 will decline by 1 percent and consumption will rise by 1 percent.

As a result, dairy prices have been on the road to recovery since last May. Last month average prices reached \$12.60 per hundredweight. And our dairy experts believe that by year's end, prices will be in the mid-\$13 range.



That's not as good as we would like, but the price is a significant improvement over what it was when I took office just seven months ago.

Congress has been wrestling with dairy legislation for the last several months. All of us want improvements. But the legislation they have proposed will make the situation worse. Unfortunately, it's very poor legislation that would do more harm to the dairy industry than good.

I support steps that are fair and helpful to all dairy farmers. These steps need to be rational, inexpensive and deal with the ups and downs of milk price swings. I'm convinced that Congress can write a better bill than the one that's now being considered. Dairy is a key issue to Minnesota, the nation's fifth largest dairy state. I'm mindful of that, and I want to be helpful.

**Now let me step back a bit.**

After I took office as Secretary of Agriculture on March 8, I outlined four key goals that I think will help pave the way for the nation's most dynamic industry, with more than 2 million farm families and the tens of millions of people who work in food-related industries.

My blueprint calls for expanding markets here and abroad, protecting private rights of farmers as they work to ensure the safety and wholesomeness of food supplies, letting farmers be farmers by reducing their paperwork burdens and, finally, educating all Americans with improved levels of nutritional information.

**Let me just underscore a couple of items for you tonight.**

First of all in the area of nutrition, I believe and I know the President believes that it's absolutely essential that we improve the quality of our nutritional education, especially for the people who participate in our Federal food programs. This means presenting the Dietary Guidelines in a simple and easily understood way for the beneficiaries of Food Stamps, WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), and the School Lunch and School Breakfast programs.

We are also spearheading an effort to make school lunches more healthy, lower in fat, salt and sugar, and adding more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to the menu so our children will get the kind of nutrition they need to do well in school. This twopronged effort will help to ensure that Americans are healthier than ever.

Moving on to trade for a moment. President Bush has told me personally, several times, and he's told farmers and ranchers, that agricultural reform is his first trade priority.

That's why we're working hard to open new markets for wheat, corn and soybeans, both at home and abroad. And that's why we're zeroing in on world trade reform under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

The so-called Uruguay Round has been in a virtual deadlock since last December. The United States has kept the heat on and has been fighting the European Community to retain our markets. But this can't go on forever.

I was encouraged earlier this week by a fresh development from Europe. Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany shifted positions. He was quoted as saying it would be "a catastrophe" if the talks did not succeed.

This is a bold step by one of the major players in the European Community. And I take it as a good sign there could be a breakthrough. Ambassador Carla Hills has been working for months, trying to get talks jump-started, and I have met three times this year with Ray MacSharry, my counterpart in the EC.

The current situation of tariffs and trade barriers in world agriculture hurts every nation. American farmers are being treated unfairly. And it's costing taxpayers and consumers around the world \$300 billion a year. It can't go on. We're pressing the EC to change their ways, show some political will, tear down those barriers and clear the way for freer trade.

Here at home, I want to expand the uses of farm crops.

Back in my office in Washington, I have a container of transmission fluid made from rapeseed oil—and the experts tell me it's a better product than petroleum-based transmission fluid.

I've got a newspaper printed on Kenaf newsprint—it has superior ink absorbing capabilities and stays a bright white color for years.

I've got a copy of "Time" magazine printed with soy oil ink—and the colors are brighter, the print's sharper and it doesn't smudge.

Scientists have now developed plastic substitutes made from the starch of corn and other crops. They're using it to make capsules for pharmaceutical, golf tees, trash bags, fast-food containers—and all of these starch-based polymers biodegrade right back into the ground.



And I'm happy to announce that Congress is agreeing to my request to expand research on alternative fuels from farm products. They've voted to more than double the research to help make alcohol-fuels more competitive with gasoline.

We've also won tentative approval of \$4.5 million for an Agricultural Research and Commercialization program. This program will work with U.S. industry to find ways to bring new discoveries to the marketplace. Whether it's through grants, loans or cooperative agreements, the idea is to tap new markets for farmers, and bring new products to consumers.

These are among the new dimensions for agriculture in the 1990s and beyond. But I can't do it alone. I need your strong, aggressive support for research in developing—and then commercializing—these “new use” agricultural products.

So these are some of the areas I want to work on. They are new directions for American agriculture.

In the Soviet Union, the direction of its agriculture—and its future—is mixed.

Almost 60 days after the failed coup, the Soviet Union and many of its republics are in disarray. Most of its leaders are striving for economic change, but it is slow in coming. Little wonder for a 74-year-old nation that covers one-sixth of the earth's land and spans 11 time zones.

President Bush asked me to lead a fact-finding mission to the Soviet Union. For the short term, we assessed the food needs of areas likely to suffer food shortages this winter. For the longer term, we attempted to pinpoint the kinds of improvements they need. I'm talking about repairs to the transportation, distribution, storage and marketing of agricultural products, from farm gate to consumer dinner tables.

To help, 12 farmers and business experts accompanied us. Minnesota was represented more than any other state.

Howard S. Gochberg, of Land 'O Lakes, sized up Soviet needs among cooperatives and processing plants; Gary Ray, of Geo. A. Hormel & Co., down in Austin, checked meat processing facilities. Russ Bragg, of Pillsbury, took special interest in grains, both milling and distribution.

Despite a smaller Soviet grain crop this year, food distribution is an even greater problem. Will there be food shortages this winter? Yes, perhaps in some areas in some types of foods. Will there be out-and-out famine? I don't think so. The long-term answer for the Soviet Union and its republics is the development of a free economy.



What's more, we found support for these steps. President Gorbachev wants it; the people we talked to want it—land reform, market reform, those sorts of things. But the officials in the middle layers of government are having difficulty in getting the message.

There is distrust of the old center government.

Let me share with you some specific observations about Soviet agriculture.

A dairy farm outside of Moscow—Gorky Farm—shipped milk in inadequately cooled bulk trucks. The physical size of the dairy plant was too large, resulting in unused capacity. The quality of milk varied, in part because equipment was old. There were few incentives to improve operations, mostly because the state fixes wholesale prices. The manager of the plant earned 2,500 rubles per month, equal to \$78 dollars.

This same collective farm had a mound of sugar beets stored on the ground. It was raining at the time. Without proper storage, the beets will rot. Lack of storage bins was a common finding throughout visits to more than five state or collective farms.

A fruit processing plant in St. Petersburg was idled because of republic disputes about whether the crops were going to be shipped.

Soviet officials, at almost every turn, said they wanted better technology. No doubt some of it is needed. But my reading is that they must first practice better management. Some of the business experts visited a poultry farm. They said a simple change in the feed ration would boost weight gains enormously.

In sum, our private experts concluded that management improvements in processing, transportation, storage and marketing could boost Soviet efficiency by up to 50 percent in some cases, without a great deal of investment in new technology.

I presented these and other findings to President Gorbachev during a two-hour meeting with him in the Kremlin. I found him to be the most radical reformer of them all.

For example, I told President Gorbachev that the United States would like to send U.S. business experts to the union and republics for several months, to improve management of distribution and processing plants. He accepted it.

I told him the United States would like to develop a model farm, perhaps around St. Petersburg in the north, where the growing season is shorter and where shortages are more likely.

That's where I may get into trouble. Mr. Gorbachev said he'd like not just one, but 1,000 farms.

Clearly, there are grain shortages in some areas. At the same time, supplies are available, but at a much higher price. Meat, for example, might not be available at a state-owned store. But you can find it at other outlets, at a much higher price.

There is confusion, at times, in the mid-level bureaucracy. Officials we met with spoke of plans to reshape the country, but they were unable to describe them. The talk is for privatization, but very little of it has taken place.

Soviet leaders have taken a big step forward in trying to draft an economic agreement. This is an encouraging sign but there are many obstacles, as republics seek to assert their own muscle.

Western assistance is critical to help ease hardship and encourage change in the former Soviet Union. The United States already has granted \$2.5 billion in food assistance since last December. That's more than any other nation.

We are now in the midst of proposing a new package of assistance, and hope to meet with President Bush shortly. Our goal is to keep American farm exports flowing, while feeding the hungry in a nation struggling to reshape itself.

The ultimate goal, of course, is to help move the Soviet Union and its republics toward a free economy.

I know you are proud that American agriculture is helping lead the way. It is helping to support President Gorbachev, President Yeltsin and others who are in the forefront of changing relations, not only with their own republics, but with the rest of the world.

Thank you and God bless you.

# News Releases

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## AGING CAN PLAY TRICKS WITH YOUR BODY'S VITAMIN AND MINERAL NEEDS

WASHINGTON—At least one out of five senior citizens may need to take extra vitamin B12 to prevent senility and other neurological disorders because the B12 in their food is poorly absorbed.

But they also should get, from their diets, the calcium they need to maintain bones and nerve function, because that mineral is not well absorbed from a commonly used supplemental form—calcium carbonate.

These were two findings from studies conducted at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts, Boston. The findings apply to men and women who no longer secrete enough stomach acid to absorb some nutrients as well as they used to, said physician Robert M. Russell. He directs gastrointestinal and micronutrient studies at the Boston center, which is funded by USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

That condition, called atrophic gastritis, affects at least 20 percent of people over age 60, increasing to about 40 percent of people over 80, Russell said. Atrophic gastritis is also known as hypochlorhydria or achlorhydria.

He said a study of 16 subjects—half of whom had atrophic gastritis—supports earlier evidence that low acidity in the gastrointestinal tract impairs absorption of the protein-bound B12 found in foods. But it does not impair absorption of the crystalline form used in supplements.

The study, reported in the October issue of *Gastroenterology Journal*, was led by visiting scientist Paolo M. Suter, who is now at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland.

“People with atrophic gastritis may need oral B12 supplementation,” Russell said. “Vitamin B12 is probably the single most important nutrient affected by aging.”

He added that poor absorption of that vitamin may be responsible for age-related declines in balance and pressure sensation, in muscle coordination, and in mental ability. The severe B12 deficiency which leads to pernicious anemia is due to other factors.



He said a study done by researchers at Columbia-Presbyterian and Harlem Hospital Centers in New York City indicates that even a mild B12 deficiency—where there's no sign of anemia—can result in neurological disorders. Older people who had serum B12 levels at the low end of the normal range had several neurologic symptoms including memory loss. However, many improved when treated with B12.

“Most elderly people don't need vitamin B12 shots,” Russell said. Since people with atrophic gastritis can absorb the vitamin in the crystalline form, they can take it as part of a multivitamin supplement, he added.

Earlier studies blamed poor B12 absorption on the lack of stomach acid and the digestive enzyme pepsin—both needed to separate the vitamin from food protein. While this is a problem, the USDA study showed that a burgeoning bacterial population in the upper intestine, due to the friendlier, low-acid environment, was responsible for “hogging” the little B12 that was separated, Russell said. However, absorption improved when the volunteers were given the antibiotic tetracycline.

The second study at the center confirmed reports that the loss of gastrointestinal acidity significantly reduces calcium absorption from supplements containing the commonly used calcium carbonate—but doesn't totally block it. But the second study also found that atrophic gastritis does not reduce the absorption of calcium from foods.

Results of this study with 15 older men and women support previous reports that calcium absorption from foods does not depend on gastrointestinal acidity. Likewise, calcium absorption from supplements containing calcium citrate also doesn't depend on gastrointestinal activity. The second study was led by Tamsin A. Knox of the New England Medical Center.

“That's a very important negative finding,” said Russell. “Otherwise, the calcium requirement would have to increase as people got older.”

Judy McBride (301) 344-3932

Issued: October 17, 1991

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## **CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM PAYMENTS TO TOTAL \$1.6 BILLION**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 17—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced that cash payments of more than \$1.6 billion will be issued to about 345,000 producers participating in the Conservation Reserve Program.

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service will notify its county offices today to immediately issue annual CRP rental payments,” Madigan said. “I’m pleased that USDA can make these payments, which are essential to many producers, now.”

The annual rental payments are for contracts producers signed to place cropland in the CRP in crop years 1986-91. This is the FY 1992 payment.

Under the CRP program, producers agree to retire from production for 10-15 years eligible cropland that is highly-erodible or contributing to a serious water quality problem. In return, USDA makes annual rental payments to the producers and shares with them the cost of establishing an approved vegetative cover. To date, 35.6 million acres have been enrolled in the CRP.

Robert Feist (202) 720-6789

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## **PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL ON RURAL AMERICA WILL HOLD HEARING IN SPRINGFIELD, ILL.**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 17—The President’s Council on Rural America will hold a public hearing with state and local leaders Oct. 23 in Springfield, Ill., to discuss economic development in the area and in rural regions around the country.

The hearing is the third in a series by the council to elicit public input in rural development policymaking.

At the hearing (to be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Holiday Inn-East, 3100 Dirksen Parkway) council members will hear from state and local government officials, as well as farm, business, and education leaders. The hearing will examine rural development policies and ways to strengthen and diversify local economies.

The council advises President Bush on rural development policy and provides guidance to federal agencies in implementing policy at the national level. The council was established in 1990 under the president's Rural Economic Development Initiative for the 90's. Its members are farmers, state and local government officials, and rural business and industry leaders.

Council Chairman Winthrop P. Rockefeller said the hearing is important because members are receiving direct feedback from state and local leaders about rural development problems and solutions.

"National policy can be effective only if it addresses problems at the local level, and supports local initiatives in solving those problems," Rockefeller said.

Undersecretary of Agriculture Roland R. Vautour said the council helps coordinate federal, state, regional and local efforts to diversify rural economies.

"Effective policies supporting rural economic diversification are key to revitalization of many rural areas," Vautour said. "The council's examination of local-level problems sharpens the federal government's ability to support local solutions. The issues that come before the council include infrastructure, community leadership, environmental issues, health, education, housing, technology, trade development and tourism."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides support to the council in cooperation with all of the federal agencies in the Economic Policy Council's Working Group on Rural Development, a permanent cabinet-level working group established to coordinate the President's Initiative on Rural Economic Development.

Other hearings scheduled by the council will be held Oct. 25 in Huntington, W.V.; Oct. 29 in Sacramento, Calif.; Nov. 7 in Binghamton, N.Y.; and Nov. 14 in Sante Fe, N.M.

Eric Ruff (202) 720-6850

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## **PRELIMINARY INQUIRY INTO CAPTIVE SUPPLIES INCONCLUSIVE**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 17—Results of a preliminary inquiry by the U.S. Department of Agriculture into the effects of captive supplies of steers and heifers on prices in paid cash markets have been inconclusive. Captive supplies are cattle that packers own or contract to purchase before the animals are ready for slaughter.

Aware of concern by livestock producers about any impact these captive supplies may have on prices, USDA's Packers and Stockyards Administration examined prices paid for cattle by 12 major packing plants between January and June 1990.

Economic and statistical analyses of that data did not rule out the possibility of either negative or positive effects of captive supplies on prices paid. Effects of captive supplies were difficult to separate from other factors affecting price.

Long term implications of captive supplies were not examined.

Captive supplies accounted for 18.9 percent of the total number of steers and heifers slaughtered by the 15 largest beef packing firms in 1990. This compares with 22.4 percent in 1989 and 19.3 percent in 1988.

P&SA will continue to examine the role of captive supplies in beef packing.

Sara Wright (202) 720-9528.

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## **USDA WITHDRAWS OPEN BORDER PROPOSAL FOR CANADIAN MEAT AND POULTRY PRODUCTS**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 17—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is withdrawing a proposal to exempt Canadian meat and poultry products from U.S. reinspection when imported into the United States.

According to Ronald J. Prucha, acting administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, this "open border" proposal was designed to produce regulatory burdens between the United States and Canada. The U.S. and Canadian inspection systems for meat and poultry are substantially similar. The proposal was published June 29, 1990.

Prucha said the proposal attracted an overwhelming number of comments that led the agency to conclude it would be impossible to finalize the open border rule as proposed.

“The rule was only a proposal and we have made no changes in our current import reinspection practices,” said Prucha. “We will confer with the Canadians to develop other ways of accomplishing our objectives without compromising public confidence in the safety of imported meat and poultry products.”

The notice of withdrawal is scheduled to be published Oct. 18 in the Federal Register.

FSIS and its 9,000 employees are dedicated to ensuring that meat and poultry products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled.

Pat Stolfa (202) 720-3473

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE AND USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATE FOR UPLAND COTTON**

Washington, Oct. 17—Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality), the coarse count adjustment and the user marketing certificate payment rate in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Oct. 18, through midnight Thursday, Oct. 24.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the adjusted world price (AWP) may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (U.S. Northern Europe price) exceeds the Northern Europe price. The maximum allowable adjustment is the difference between the U.S. Northern Europe price and the Northern Europe price.

Based on data for the week ending Oct. 17, a further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP may be made in accordance with this provision. The calculated AWP is 101.48 percent of the 1991 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the U.S. Northern Europe price exceeds the Northern Europe price by 2.70 cents per pound. Below are the relevant calculations.

I.	Calculated AWP .....	51.52 cents per pound
	1991 Base Loan Rate .....	50.77 cents per pound
	AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate .....	101.48
II.	U.S. Northern Europe Price .....	70.75 cents per pound
	Northern Europe Price .....	-68.05 cents per pound
	Maximum Adjustment Allowed .....	2.70 cents per pound

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant data, a further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP will not be made.

The estimated cost associated with transporting U.S. cotton to northern Europe has been revised, increasing from 13.61 to 14.16 cents per pound. The average U.S. spot market location adjustment used to calculate today's announced AWP reflects the revision.

Based on data for the week ending Oct. 17, the AWP for base quality upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

*Table on next page*



### Adjusted World Price

Northern Europe Price .....	68.05
Adjustments:	
Average U.S. spot market location .....	14.28
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton .....	1.90
Average U.S. location .....	0.35
Sum of Adjustments .....	<u>-16.53</u>
Calculated AWP .....	-51.52
Further AWP adjustment .....	<u>- 0</u>
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE .....	51.52 cents/lb.

### Coarse Count Adjustment

Northern Europe Price .....	68.05
Northern Europe Coarse Count Price .....	<u>-64.93</u>
	3.12
Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton .....	<u>-4.20</u>
	-1.08

COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT ..... 0 cents/lb.

Since the AWP is above the 1989, 1990 and 1991 crop base quality loan rates of 50.00, 50.27 and 50.77 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rates for the 1989, 1990 and 1991 crops of upland cotton during this period are equal to the respective loan rates, adjusted for the specific quality and location, plus any applicable interest and charges.

The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates. Because the AWP in effect is above the established loan rate, loan deficiency payments are not available for 1991-crop upland cotton during this period.

Based on data for the week ending Oct. 17, the U.S. Northern Europe price exceeded the Northern Europe price by more than 1.25 cents per pound for the fourth consecutive week, resulting in a certificate payment rate of 1.45 cents per pound. Relevant data used in determining the user marketing certificate payment rate are summarized below:

		U.S.			
	For the	Northern	Northern		
	Friday through	Europe	Europe	(1)	Certificate
	Thursday	Price	Price	Minus	Payment
Week	Period Ending	(1)	(2)	(2)	Rate <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(1) minus (2) for Week 4 minus 1.25 cents.

The next announcement of the AWP, coarse count adjustment and user marketing certificate payment rate will be made on Thursday, Oct. 24.

Charles Cunningham (202) 720-7954

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## PHILIPPINES ELIGIBLE FOR MORE BARLEY MALT UNDER EXPORT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, Oct. 18—Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard T. Crowder today announced an opportunity for sales of an additional 35,000 metric tons of U.S. barley malt to the Philippines under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Export Enhancement Program.

Sales of barley malt will be made to buyers in the Philippines through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices. The export sales will be facilitated through the payment of bonuses in the form of commodities from the inventory of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation. The subsidy will enable U.S. exporters to compete at commercial prices in the Filipino market.

This allocation will be valid for a one-year period as provided for in

the invitation for offers. Details of the program, including an invitation for offers from exporters, will be issued in the near future.

For more information call Richard J. Chavez, (202) 720-9240, or Larry McElvain, (202) 720-6221.

Sally Klusaritz (202) 720-3448

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## HIGH-TECH TOMATOES RIPEN ON COMMAND

WASHINGTON, Oct. 18—Tomatoes that don't ripen until growers and processors want them to could reduce spoilage and lead to fresher tomatoes, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist. And similar results are possible with other fruits, vegetables and cut flowers, he said.

Athanasios Theologis of USDA's Agricultural Research Service said experimental tomatoes have been genetically engineered to "stay on the vine and keep growing but not ripen or age." That's because the test tomatoes don't produce ethylene, a gas which causes ripening and eventual spoilage in regular tomatoes—as well as in many other plants, he said.

"This is a major breakthrough that will revolutionize the production, processing and marketing of fresh fruits, vegetables and cut flowers," said ARS Administrator R. Dean Plowman. "To be able to control the ripening process will permit the industry to provide abundant supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables year-round with no loss of nutritional value. Millions of dollars will be saved from refrigeration costs and spoilage losses as a result of this technology," said Plowman.

Theologis is a plant molecular biologist with ARS. He and coresearchers conducted the test in labs and greenhouses at the Plant Gene Expression Center operated in Albany, Calif. by ARS and the University of California.

The tests—described in the cover story of today's issue of Science—mark the first time researchers have succeeded in genetically engineering a plant to shut down almost all ethylene production, Theologis said.

The research can be used as the basis for further studies before the tomatoes can move to the marketplace, he said. That could include work to ensure that commercial tomatoes will have the flavor and other qualities consumers demand.



And, as with any genetically engineered crop, federal approval would be required to grow and market the tomatoes. But when that happens, he said, tomatoes could be stored or shipped at room temperature. When they arrive at their destination—such as a processing plant or foreign market—ethylene would be applied to ripen the tomatoes.

The same process could work with other vegetables, fruits and cut flowers, Theologis said. Up to 50 percent of all fresh produce harvested in the U.S. is lost to spoilage, he said. Much of the loss is due to ethylene, and costly cold storage is required to slow the effects of ethylene given off naturally by fresh produce, he noted.

The tomato tests were performed by Theologis, Albany colleagues Paul W. Oeller and Lu Min-Wong, of the University of California, and former coresearchers Loverine P. Taylor, of Washington State University, and Deborah A. Pike of Cetus Corporation.

The research team did not conduct taste tests or measure the experimental tomatoes' natural flavor-imparting chemicals. But the tomatoes "stayed on the vine longer without deteriorating, so they had more time to take up sugars and acids important to flavor," Theologis said. Some tomatoes remained on vines in the greenhouse for five months.

To block ethylene production, the researchers rebuilt a tomato gene they had earlier identified and cloned. They exposed 14-day-old tomato plantlets to a microorganism, *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, that contained the gene. *A. tumefaciens* is widely used in biotechnology to move new genes into plants. Plantlets that took up the gene were nurtured to maturity in the greenhouse.

In nature, the unaltered gene directs plants to form a substance called messenger RNA, or mRNA. This mRNA contains the instructions plants follow to make an enzyme. Plants must have the enzyme, called ACC synthase, in order to make ethylene.

The rebuilt gene, however, contains the message in reverse. Scientists suspect this "antisense RNA" binds to the normal message produced by unmodified genes. That leaves plants unable to read the normal message—and unable to make the crucial enzyme.

The antisense RNA tactic blocked 99.5 percent of all ethylene production in about 100 greenhouse-grown tomatoes that Theologis and coresearchers tested during the past year.

When tomatoes harvested from the genetically engineered plants were treated with ethylene for seven days, they ripened and softened. "They

had the aroma of a vine-ripened crop,” Theologis said. “In texture, color and firmness, the genetically engineered tomatoes were indistinguishable from naturally ripened tomatoes.”

Commercially grown tomatoes are often picked green and hard, when they are less vulnerable to bruising and overripening. The green tomatoes are exposed to ethylene for about three to five days to trigger ripening.

The antisense RNA strategy, Theologis said, might be used successfully to thwart ethylene production in apples, melons, lettuce, bananas and hundreds of other kinds of perishable produce.

What’s more, the technology could likely delay withering of cut flowers, such as carnations, which produce large amounts of ethylene.

Marcia Wood (510) 559-6070

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## **USDA HELPS TOWNS OBTAIN DRY HYDRANTS FOR FIGHTING FIRES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES**

WASHINGTON—“It’s probably the biggest boost for rural fire protection since the organization of volunteer fire departments.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Walley Turner used that comparison to describe “dry hydrants,” whose application for fire fighting is a recent development in many rural areas.

Turner, assistant state conservationist for programs with USDA’s Soil Conservation Service in South Carolina, said there are many rural families throughout the nation which can’t obtain fire insurance on their residences because of an inadequate water supply for fire fighting equipment.

However, many rural communities are attempting to resolve this dilemma by installing “dry hydrants”—non-pressurized pipe systems permanently installed in existing farm ponds, lakes, and streams.

“A dry hydrant provides a ready supply of water to be tapped for fighting rural fires,” Turner said. “Specifically, a dry hydrant system reduces the need for fire fighters to travel long distances to refill the tanks on their fire trucks, when battling fires in rural areas.”

According to Gerald Seinwill director of SCS’s Engineering Division in its headquarters office in Washington, DC, dry hydrants are simple in design and construction. A typical dry hydrant system includes a pipe buried about three feet below the lowest likely surface level that the pond



would be in a dry year. The pipe generally runs from the pond to an all-weather road—or some other equally accessible spot—where it is capped above surface with the dry hydrant itself.

Each dry hydrant is normally equipped with a snap-off lid, or other appropriate devices so the hookup to a fire truck hose can take place with no tools and during a typically pitch-dark country night.

Costs for installing a dry hydrant range from \$300-\$500, depending on the depth and length of the pipe and installation can take an average of three to four hours to complete.

SCS conservationists have been assisting with site selection and design of the dry hydrant systems throughout rural South Carolina—as well as in a number of other states. Local Resource Conservation and Development Councils in the state have been coordinating installation of the systems and promoting the overall program.

“Dry hydrants are not only helping to reduce the loss of lives and property,” said SCS’s Steve Edwards, “but as an additional benefit, they’re also bringing about a significant decrease in the cost of fire insurance for homeowners and businesses.”

Edwards, the agency’s coordinator of the Lowcountry Resource Conservation and Development Council Office in southwestern South Carolina, explained that the greatest factor affecting fire insurance premiums is the availability of a water supply. Homeowners insurance premiums are based on a rating scale. A rating of 10 indicates there is no practical fire protection available.

“Many rural areas have a rating of nine or 10,” he said. “So this means that few insurance companies will consider writing a policy in such an area—or if they do, they’ll charge really high premiums.”

To get a lower rating, a fire department must be able to pump a minimum of 250 gallons of water per minute for two hours. “The only way rural fire departments can meet this requirement is to have a source of water within one to two miles of the fire—preferably through use of a dry hydrant,” said Jerry Williams, chief of the Lesslie Fire Department in York County, S.C.

Williams said that the Lesslie Fire Department received a lot of cooperation from pond owners when SCS and fire department officials were looking for sites to install dry hydrants. “Once we explained how the hydrant would give us better fire fighting capabilities and would let all the people in the community save on their insurance premiums,” he said, “we didn’t have any opposition at all.”



In fact, the installation of nine dry hydrants in Lesslie resulted in the lowering of fire insurance premiums on an \$80,000 home from \$519 to \$336 per year in 1990. In addition, according to Williams, by reducing the miles traveled by fire fighting transportation equipment, the use of dry hydrants saved an estimated 2,500 gallons of fuel in 1990—as well as wear and tear on the equipment.

Turner pointed out that dry hydrants offer still another advantage. “They allow the use of natural, unprocessed water to fight fires,” he said.

“This saves the more expensive, processed drinking water for its intended use.”

Ann Rose (803) 765-5402

Issued: October 21, 1991

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## **SOVIET UNION ELIGIBLE FOR MORE WHEAT UNDER EXPORT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

LINCOLN, Ill., Oct. 18—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced an opportunity for sales of an additional 3.0 million metric tons of U.S. wheat to the Soviet Union under the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Export Enhancement Program.

Under the EEP, sales of the wheat will be made to buyers in the Soviet Union through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices. The sales will be facilitated through the payment of bonuses in the form of commodities from the inventory of USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation. This subsidy will enable U.S. exporters to compete at commercial prices in the Soviet market.

This allocation will be valid for a one-year period as provided for in the invitation for offers. Details of the program, including an invitation for offers from exporters, will be issued in the near future.

For more information, call Randy Baxter, (202) 382-9240, or Larry McElvain, (202) 447-6211.

Becky Broeking (202) 720-3448

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## MADIGAN SEEKS NOMINEES FOR NATIONAL DAIRY BOARD

LINCOLN, ILL., Oct. 18—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today asked dairy producers and farm organizations certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to nominate candidates to succeed 12 members of the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board whose terms expire April 30, 1992.

Madigan will appoint 12 from those nominated to serve 3-year terms beginning May 1, 1992, and ending April 30, 1995.

Members whose 3-year terms expire April 30 are: (region 1)—Alvin J. Sherman, Coupeville, Wash.; (region 2)—Robert W. Giacomini, Point Reyes, Calif.; Mary B. Parente, Ontario, Calif.; Ronald B. Quinn, Tulare, Calif.; (region 4)—William E. Bugg, Hennessey, Okla.; (region 6)—Sylvia J. Hemauer, Plymouth, Wis.; John A. Malcheski, Pulaski, Wis.; (region 7)—Lester M. Evans, Lebanon, Mo.; (region 9)—Elwood C. Kirpatrick, Kinde, Mich.; (region 10)—H. Todd Arant, Bowman, S.C.; (region 11)—Ernest O. Miller, Hamburg, Pa.; (region 12)—P. Kay Zeosky, Turin, N.Y.

All of the above members, except Lester M. Evans and Ernest O. Miller, have served one 3-year term and thus are eligible for re-nomination. The two exceptions are not eligible for re-nomination since they have served two terms. No terms for regions 3 (Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming), 5 (Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota), 8 (Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee) and 13 (Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire Rhode Island and Vermont) expire in 1992.

The National Dairy Promotion and Research Board, established under the Dairy and Tobacco Adjustment Act of 1983, develops and administers a coordinated program of promotion, research and nutrition education. The 36-member board of milk producers is authorized to design programs to strengthen the dairy industry's position in domestic and foreign markets.

The national program is financed by a mandatory 15-cent per hundredweight assessment on all milk marketed commercially by dairymen in the contiguous 48 states.

Nominations must be submitted by Nov. 29 to Bonnie Tanner, USDA, AMS, Dairy Division, Promotion and Research Staff, Rm. 2753-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. For more information, contact Tanner at (202) 720-6909.

Alicia L. Ford (202) 720-8998

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## **CHROMIUM IS HARD TO COME BY, WELL-BALANCED DIET OR NOT**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 21—A well-balanced diet doesn't necessarily provide enough chromium, the essential trace element that helps keep blood sugar from rising too high or dipping too low, a U.S. Department of Agriculture nutrition scientist reports.

Chromium works hand-in-hand with insulin to keep blood glucose at the optimum level for fueling metabolic processes, said Richard A. Anderson of USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

Anderson determined the chromium content of 22 well-balanced diets prepared by nutritionists at the ARS Human Nutrition Research Center in Beltsville, Md. during the course of several long-term studies.

While a couple of the diets provided the minimum suggested intake of 50 micrograms (millionths of a gram) per day, most did not. The average chromium content of the diets was 13.4 mcg per 1,000 calories, said Anderson.

“At that level, a person would have to eat close to 4,000 calories a day to get 50 mcg of chromium,” he said. Typical daily intakes in the Beltsville studies were 2,273 calories for women; 2,950 for men. “It's difficult to get enough chromium from foods.”

Anderson said a number of studies, including his own, show that a daily 200-mcg-chromium supplement normalizes blood glucose in people with levels both above and below normal. And it helps lower triglycerides and cholesterol, since the element is involved in fat metabolism as well as glucose metabolism. The suggested safe and adequate intake is 50 to 200 mcg.

Anderson said a significant amount of the chromium present in foods is likely added during growing, handling and processing. It may sneak in



through fortification with calcium or other minerals or through preparation in stainless steel containers, which are about 18 percent chromium.

The mineral is present in foods in such small quantities, he said, that it takes only a small amount from outside sources to raise the content noticeably.

For instance, one cup of broccoli contained 22 mcg of chromium—at least 10 times more than other fruits and vegetables analyzed—which he suspects may have come from chemical sprays. The peeling of apples reduced chromium content by 70 percent—from 1.4 to 0.4 mcg per apple—bringing it close to the content of peeled oranges.

And three ounces of turkey ham—a processed luncheon meat—contained 10 mcg of chromium, which is at least five times more chromium than the same amount of beef, chicken, turkey or ham, he said.

Anderson also observed that the chromium content of individual lots of the same food varies widely. His findings will be published in the January- March 1992 issue of Biological Trace Element Research.

Judy McBride (301) 344-4095

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## **BEECH-NUT RECALLS “CHICKEN & STARS” MICROWAVE PRODUCT NATIONWIDE**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 18—Beech-Nut Nutrition Corporation, a St. Louis food-processing firm, is voluntarily recalling approximately 230,000 6-ounce tubs of its “Beech-Nut Table Time Chicken & Stars Microwave Meal for Children.”

The company is recalling the product because some of the packages may contain lumps of chicken that are difficult to swallow, according to William J. Hudnall, a deputy administrator of USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The product has been distributed to wholesalers and retailers in at least 21 states: Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. The product may have been distributed to other states as well.

The suspect product can be identified by the label, by "EST P-6817" inside the USDA inspection seal on the label, and by a two-line production code stamped on the bottom of the container. The first line of the production code is "FEB93" preceded by the numerals "08," "09," "14," "15," or "19." The second line of the production code is "18G0885" followed by the letter "A," "B," "C," "D," "E," "F," "G," or "H." An example of a production code would have "09FEB93" on the top line and "18G0885F" on the bottom line. Only containers of the product with these production codes are included in the recall.

"Because of the potential choking hazard, we strongly urge consumers to avoid eating the product or feeding it to children," said Hudnall.

"Consumers should return packages unopened to the place of purchase."

The problem was discovered when the company began receiving reports of children choking, gagging, and spitting out lumps of chicken from the product, according to Hudnall.

Consumers with questions about the recall may phone the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555. Hotline operators can be reached from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (EST) Monday through Friday. At other times callers can hear a recorded message. Callers in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area may call (202) 447-3333. Both phone numbers provide access to a telecommunications device for the hearing impaired.

FSIS and its 9,000 employees are dedicated to ensuring that meat and poultry products are safe, wholesome and accurately labeled.

Jim Green (202) 720-0314  
(301) 294-3015

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## USDA RELEASES SIBERIAN LOG IMPORT ASSESSMENT

WASHINGTON, Oct. 21—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today released two reports that can be used by the forest industry to evaluate the practicality of importing timber from the Soviet Union. The reports analyze the potential pest risks and treatment options associated with such importation.

"Industry now has the opportunity to review the assessments and suggested pest treatment options," said B. Glen Lee, deputy administrator



for plant protection and quarantine with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "The forest industry can then determine whether any of the recommended treatment options make it economical to import Soviet timber."

APHIS is the government agency charged with regulating international commerce into the United States to prevent the introduction of exotic pests and diseases via imported nursery stock, seeds, fruits and vegetables, or forest products.

"Before Soviet timber is allowed entry into the United States, the pest hazard in the commodity must be eliminated," Lee said. "In general, any quarantine measures designed for importing logs will have to be operationally feasible, effective, environmentally acceptable, and in compliance with federal and state regulations."

At this time, Lee said, the option with the most potential is debarking and/or chemical treatment conducted in the Soviet Union, followed by heat treatment in the United States. In addition, any imported forest product must be free of soil before entry is granted and protected against reinfestation after treatment.

Currently, there are no specific federal regulatory requirements for entry of timber products from a foreign source. The USDA reports identify the potential pest risks associated with importing timber from the Soviet Far East and Siberia and assess potential measures for mitigation of these risks.

In mid-1990, exotic pests were found on two test shipments of Soviet logs that entered the United States at Oakland, Calif., for processing in Eureka, Calif.

To evaluate the broad scope of potential risks to U.S. forestry from Soviet log imports, APHIS asked USDA's Forest Service to identify and assess the risks such importations could pose. The Forest Service formed a pest risk assessment team and involved scientists and specialists from universities, federal laboratories, and state, federal, and Canadian forestry and regulatory agencies.

"The risk assessment team identified 176 potential insects and diseases that could affect larch timber. In the teams' comprehensive report to APHIS, specific assessments were provided on 36 representative species," said Allan J. West, deputy chief for state and private forestry with the Forest Service.

"Most of these pests have the potential to infest extensive areas of one or more forest types in the United States. Possible ecological effects on



our forests from exotic pests include deforestation, wildlife habitat destruction, increased fire hazard, and loss of biodiversity.”

Estimates of the amount of timber from the Soviet Union that could be imported into the United States range from 150 to 425 million board feet per year. The imported logs could include up to four softwoods—larch, pine, spruce and fir.

Doug Hendrix (301) 436-7253

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22—Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard T. Crowder today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

- long grain whole kernels, 9.74 cents per pound;
- medium grain whole kernels, 8.80 cents per pound;
- short grain whole kernels, 8.75 cents per pound;
- broken kernels, 4.87 cents per pound.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, rough rice world prices are estimated to be:

- long grain, \$6.03 per hundredweight;
- medium grain, \$5.52 per hundredweight;
- short grain, \$5.45 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3 p.m. EDT. The next scheduled announcement will be made Oct. 29 at 3 p.m. EST, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

Gene Rosera (202) 720-7923

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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service will no longer issue a summary of the quarterly Food Review Outlook. The next summary was scheduled for Friday, Oct. 25.

Diane Decker (202) 219-0494

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## **USDA SETTLES NINE ANIMAL WELFARE ACT COMPLIANCE CASES**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22—The U.S. Department of Agriculture resolved nine cases between July and September to enforce the humane treatment of animals regulated under the Animal Welfare Act.

Robert B. Melland, acting administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said the cases resulted from charges of violating the Animal Welfare Act's regulations.

Animal dealers, breeders, transportation companies, exhibitors and research facilities must be licensed or registered under the law. USDA conducts periodic, unannounced inspections to ensure compliance. Action is taken against violators if efforts to secure compliance are unsuccessful.

The following individuals or businesses were ordered to stop violating the Animal Welfare Act and were assessed civil penalties, license suspensions or revocations, in some cases. These cease-and-desist orders include requirements for specific actions that the regulated parties must take.

The following case was resolved through administrative prosecution:

—Animal exhibitors David and Judy Twomey, doing business as Happytime Dog & Pony Circus, Windsor, Calif., fined \$4,000 and five-month license suspension. The Twomeys were charged with operating without a license and failing to properly store food for dogs and a llama. They also were charged with failing to maintain records that showed the acquisition, disposition, description and identification of the animals.

The following parties did not admit or deny they violated the regulations but agreed to the issuance of a consent decision in the settlement of the case. Details of the penalties and charges are as follows:

—Animal dealer Mary Jane Wood, Cincinnati, Iowa, 10-year license revocation. Wood was charged with failing to provide dogs with sufficient housing, shelter, veterinary care, sanitation and ventilation. Wood also was charged with failing to maintain records that showed acquisition, disposition, description and identification of the animals.

—Animal dealer Letha Hamilton, Goodman, Miss., fined \$1,000 and 10-year license revocation. Hamilton was charged with failing to provide dogs with sufficient housing, sanitation, veterinary care and protection from rodent contamination or infestation. Hamilton also was charged with failing to maintain records that showed acquisition, disposition, description and identification of the animals.

—Animal exhibitor Mary Valentine-Balch, doing business as Edmond Wolf Sanctuary, Edmond, Okla., ordered to stop violating the Animal Welfare Act. Valentine-Balch was charged with operating without a license.

—Animal dealers Leland and Janice Finley, Mountain View, Mo., fined \$500 and prohibited from obtaining a license for two years. The Finleys were charged with failing to provide dogs with sufficient housing, shelter, protection from extreme weather and temperatures, sanitation and veterinary care. The Finleys also were charged with failing to maintain records that showed acquisition, disposition, description and identification of the animals.

—Animal dealers Francis and Carla Bobzien, doing business as B&C Kennels, Clark, S.D., fined \$500 and two-year license revocation. The Bobziens were charged with operating without a license and failing to provide dogs with adequate shelter, protection from extreme temperatures and sanitation.

—Animal dealer Carl Edward Read, Hebbronville, Texas, prohibited from engaging in a business requiring a license for two years and fined \$1,000, which was suspended. Read was charged with operating without a license and selling seven wild bobcat cubs as pets while unlicensed.

—Animal exhibitors Gustave “Gus” White, III and Betty White, doing business as Collins Exotic Animal Orphanage, Collins, Miss., fined \$10,000, which was suspended provided the Whites do not violate the Animal Welfare Act for one year. The Whites were charged with operating without a license and failing to provide the proper safeguards to prevent the escape of dangerous animals.



—Animal dealer Ricky Garrett, Hernando, Miss., fined \$1,000. Garrett was charged with operating without a license and failing to provide sufficient housing, shelter, sanitation and pest control.

The Animal Welfare Act requires that the care and treatment of certain animals be provided according to standards established by APHIS. Animals protected by the law must be provided with adequate housing, handling, sanitation, food, water, transportation, veterinary care and protection against extremes of weather and temperature. The regulations also provide for the exercise of dogs and a physical environment adequate to promote the psychological well-being of nonhuman primates. The law covers animals that are sold as pets at the wholesale level, used for biomedical research or used for exhibition purposes.

APHIS enforces the Animal Welfare Act primarily by conducting unannounced inspections and through administrative prosecution when warranted. Failure to respond to the charges in the complaint results in the issuance of a default order by the administrative law judge who assesses penalties. Many of these cases are resolved through the consent decision provision of the regulations. Under these provisions, USDA and the party named in the complaint agree to a hearing before an administrative law judge, who issues a decision. Any party may appeal an adverse decision by the judicial officer. The respondent may appeal an adverse decision by the judicial officers to the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Kendra Pratt (301) 436-4898

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## **PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON RURAL AMERICA WILL HOLD HEARING IN WEST VIRGINIA**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22—The President's Council on Rural America will hold a public hearing with state and local leaders Oct. 25 in Huntington, W. Va., to discuss economic development in the area and in rural regions around the country.

The hearing is the fourth in a series by the council to elicit public input in rural development policymaking.

At the hearing (to be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Radisson Hotel, 1001 3rd Ave., Huntington) council members will hear from state and local government officials, as well as farm, business, and education

leaders. The hearing will examine rural development policies and ways to strengthen and diversify local economies.

The council will report to President Bush on rural development policy and provide guidance to federal agencies in implementing policy at the national level. The council was established in 1990 under the president's Rural Economic Development Initiative for the 90's. Its members are farmers, state and local government officials, and rural business and industry leaders.

Council Chairman Winthrop P. Rockefeller said the hearing is important because members are receiving direct feedback from state and local leaders about rural development problems and solutions.

"National policy can be effective only if it addresses problems at the local level, and supports local initiatives in solving those problems," Rockefeller said.

Undersecretary of Agriculture Roland R. Vautour said the council helps coordinate federal, state, regional and local efforts to diversify rural economies.

"Effective policies supporting rural economic diversification are key to revitalization of many rural areas," Vautour said. "The council's examination of local-level problems sharpens the federal government's ability to support local solutions. The issues that come before the council include infrastructure, community leadership, environmental issues, health, education, housing, technology, trade development and tourism."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides support to the council in cooperation with all of the federal agencies in the Economic Policy Council's Working Group on Rural Development, a permanent cabinet-level working group established to coordinate the President's Initiative on Rural Economic Development.

Arthur Whitmore (202) 720-4026

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## TENNESSEE STOCKYARD OWNER ARRESTED FOR ASSAULTING USDA EMPLOYEE

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22—The owner of a Tennessee stockyard was arrested Monday for assaulting a U.S. Department of Agriculture livestock technician.

USDA Inspector General Leon Snead said James Leroy Bartlett, 55, of Middleton, Tenn., was indicted by a federal grand jury and charged with assault with a deadly weapon.

According to the indictment, Bartlett struck a USDA Animal Health Technician with a cattle whip during an auction being held at Bartlett's Middleton Livestock Sale Company. The technician, who is employed by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, attended the auction to inspect cattle which were to be shipped interstate. The alleged assault apparently occurred after the technician had directed that one cow be sent to slaughter after it tested positive for brucellosis, a highly infectious cattle disease.

The case is being prosecuted by U.S. Attorney Ed Bryant and Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Clancy, Western District of Tennessee. If convicted, Bartlett could receive a maximum sentence of 10 years in jail and a fine of \$250,000.

The arrest was made by an agent of USDA's Office of Inspector General and a Deputy U.S. Marshal.

Snead said this was the second recent OIG arrest based on charges stemming from assaults on USDA employees. On Sept. 5, Andy Eugene Jordon, 20, of Harrellsville, N.C., was charged and arrested with beating an employee of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. The employee was attempting to measure one of Jordon's tobacco fields when the alleged assault occurred. Jordon's trial is pending. This investigation was coordinated with U.S. Attorney Margaret Currin, Eastern District of North Carolina.

Snead emphasized that he considers assaults on USDA employees a very serious crime and that investigating those matters will remain a high priority.

Dave Dixon (202) 720-6701

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## USDA BEGINS SHIPPING STERILE SCREWORM FLIES TO EL SALVADOR

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23—The U.S. Department of Agriculture last week began sending sterilized screwworm flies to El Salvador for aerial release in a screwworm eradication program, according to an official with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"This is the beginning of active operations under the screwworm eradication agreement which APHIS signed with El Salvador last July," said Alejandro B. Thiermann, APHIS' deputy administrator of international services.

"The first shipment of 12 million flies left from the production facility near Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, in southern Mexico for a dispersal center in San Salvador, El Salvador," Thierman said.

El Salvador, the third Central American country to adopt a screwworm eradication program, will receive 12 million sterile flies twice a week throughout the two-year eradication project. Honduras has signed a similar agreement and is scheduled to begin receiving sterile flies by the end of the month.

"Our goal in Central America is to help these countries eradicate this pest and set up an animal health infrastructure that can continue to operate to prevent reinfestations," said Thiermann. "By eliminating screwworms from Central America, we are further decreasing the risk of infestation to our own livestock industry. Our plan is to establish a permanent barrier in Panama by 1996."

Screwworms are parasites of warmblooded animals. They once infested the southern United States and most of Mexico and ravaged livestock production in those areas. The female screwworm fly lays eggs in open wounds of warm-blooded animals, and the developing larvae feed on the flesh of the wounds. Once a wound is infested, it attracts other female flies who lay more eggs. Because of continual infestations, screwworm cases are usually fatal if not treated. More than 200 cases of screwworms in humans have been reported in El Salvador this year.

Eradication procedures include dropping sterile screwworm flies from aircraft over infested areas, inspection of livestock and treatment of wounds, surveying infested areas and enforcement of quarantines.

The production facility in Mexico is the only massrearing facility of its kind in the world. The facility is managed jointly by a Mexico-U.S. commission.

Although screwworms were eradicated from Mexico at the beginning of this year, the joint commission is continuing to provide sterile flies for use in Guatemala, Belize and El Salvador. The plant also has provided flies for a United Nations eradication project in North Africa that successfully ended this month.

Mary Yurkovich (301) 436-7251

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## USDA PROTECTS 32 NEW PLANT VARIETIES

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued certificates of protection to developers of 32 new varieties of seedreproduced plants, including barley, creeping bentgrass, corn, cotton, lettuce, pea, phlox, rice, soybean steirodiscus and wheat.

Kenneth H. Evans, an official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said developers of the new varieties will have the exclusive right to reproduce, sell, import, and export their products in the United States for 18 years. Certificates of protection are granted after a review of the breeders' records and claims that each new variety is novel, uniform and stable.

The following varieties have been issued certificates of protection:

—the Camargue and Corniche varieties of barley, developed by Sharpes International Seeds Limited, Lincolnshire, England;

—the Camelot variety of barley, developed by MMG Agriseed, Norfolk, United Kingdom and Tainio Technology & Technique, Cheney, Wash.;

—the putter variety of creeping bentgrass, developed by the Jacklin Seed Co., Post Falls, Idaho;

—the FBLL variety of corn, developed by Dekalb Plant Genetics, DeKalb, Ill.;

—the GP 74+ variety of cotton, developed by G & P Seed Co. Inc., Aquilla, Texas;

—the Genecorp Cos, Ideal Cos, Major Cos, and Cos King varieties of lettuce, developed by Genecorp Inc., Salinas, Calif.;

—the Pinnacle variety of lettuce, developed by Bruce Church Inc., Salinas, Calif.;



—the Red Sceptre, Andros, and Le Cup varieties of lettuce, developed by the Asgrow Seed Co., Kalamazoo Mich.;

—the Aim, Karisma, Micro, Alfi, and Pronto varieties of pea, developed by the Asgrow Seed Co., Kalamazoo, Mich.;

—the Somerset variety of pea, developed by the Rogers NK Seed Co., Boise, Idaho;

—the Palona Deep Rose, Palona Light Salmon, Palona White, Palona Deep Salmon, Palona Carmine, and Palona White with Eye varieties of phlox, developed by Sluis & Groot Research, Enkhuizen, The Netherlands;

—the RT-A1001 and RT-A1002 varieties of rice, developed by the Farms of Texas Co., Alvin, Texas;

—the S31-33 and 6925 varieties of soybean, developed by the Northrup King Co., Minneapolis, Minn.;

—the Gold Rush variety of steirodiscus, developed by Takii and Co. Ltd., Salinas, Calif.; and

—the Vance variety of wheat, developed by the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station, St. Paul, Minn.

The certificates of protection for the Camargue, Corniche, and Camelot barley varieties, the GP 74+ cotton variety, and the Gold Rush steirodiscus variety are being issued to be sold by variety name only as a class of certified seed, and to conform to the number of generations specified by the owner.

The plant variety protection program is administered by AMS and provides marketing protection to developers of new and distinctive seedreproduced plants ranging from farm crops to flowers.

Rebecca Unkenholz (202) 720-8998

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## **FGIS FINANCIAL ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE TO MEET IN KANSAS CITY**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Grain Inspection Service Financial Advisory Subcommittee will meet at 8 a.m. Friday, Nov. 15, at the USDA/FGIS Technical Center, 10383 North Executive Hills Boulevard, Kansas City, Mo.

The group is a subcommittee of the FGIS advisory committee, which provides advice to the FGIS administrator on the implementation of the



U.S. Grain Standards Act. The subcommittee will review and prepare recommendations on financial matters affecting FGIS.

FGIS Administrator John C. Foltz said agenda items will include the agency's financial status, fee structures, and overhead.

The meeting will be open to the public. Public participation will be limited to written statements unless permission is received from the subcommittee chairman to orally address the committee. Persons wishing to address the subcommittee or submit written statements before, at, or after the meeting, should contact Randy Marten, Subcommittee Chairman, 6211 Lenmon Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75209, telephone (214) 358-9202; or John C. Foltz, Administrator, FGIS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 96454, Washington, D.C. 20090-6454, telephone (202) 382-0219.

Dana Stewart (202) 720-5091

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## **PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON RURAL AMERICA WILL HOLD HEARING IN SACRAMENTO**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23—The President's Council on Rural America will hold a public hearing with state and local leaders Oct. 29 in Sacramento, Calif., to discuss economic development in the area and in rural regions around the country.

The hearing is the fifth in a series by the council to elicit public input in rural development policymaking.

At the hearing (to be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Hotel El Rancho, 1029 West Capitol Ave., in West Sacramento) council members will hear from state and local government officials, as well as farm, business, and education leaders. The hearing will examine rural development policies and ways to strengthen and diversify local economies.

The council advises President Bush on rural development policy and provides guidance to federal agencies in implementing policy at the national level. The council was established in 1990 under the president's Rural Economic Development Initiative for the 90's. Its members are farmers, state and local government officials, and rural business and industry leaders.

Council Chairman Winthrop P. Rockefeller said the hearing is important because members are receiving direct feedback from state and

local leaders about rural development problems and solutions.

“National policy can be effective only if it addresses problems at the local level, and supports local initiatives in solving those problems,” Rockefeller said.

Undersecretary of Agriculture Roland R. Vautour said the council helps coordinate federal, state, regional and local efforts to diversify rural economies.

“Effective policies supporting rural economic diversification are key to revitalization of many rural areas,” Vautour said. “The council’s examination of local-level problems sharpens the federal government’s ability to support local solutions. The issues that come before the council include infrastructure, community leadership, environmental issues, health, education, housing, technology, trade development and tourism.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides support to the council in cooperation with all of the federal agencies in the Economic Policy Council’s Working Group on Rural Development, a permanent cabinet-level working group established to coordinate the President’s Initiative on Rural Economic Development.

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## **MICROBE HELPS COWS DIGEST FORAGE FOR LOWER FEED COSTS**

WASHINGTON—Bacteria with a borrowed gene could help cattle get the most nutrition from their feed and substantially reduce the cost of raising beef and dairy animals.

Animal feed can represent more than 50 percent of the cost of producing livestock. But animals don’t always get the full nutritional benefit of forages such as grasses, hay, and corn silage because their digestive systems can’t completely break down the fiber in their feed.

Now scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture have equipped bacterium from the human colon with a gene from a bacterium found in the rumen—the stomach—of cattle. Laboratory tests indicate the modified organism, dubbed BTX, may survive in a cow’s rumen and help bacteria that are naturally there break down fiber into more easily digested carbohydrates.



“A major component in the fiber portion of forages is material called xylan,” said Terence R. Whitehead, a research microbiologist with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service.

“Only half of the total xylan in forages is broken down by natural populations of bacteria in the cow’s rumen. If we can increase dietary digestibility of the cow’s feed by as little as 5 percent, this could result in a potential savings for farmers of millions of dollars in animal feed costs.”

In one laboratory study, the BTX organism was grown with xylan isolated from the outer husk of oats. BTX broke down more than 40 percent the xylan into smaller carbohydrates. These carbohydrates then were used for growth by natural organisms found in the cow’s rumen that are not able to break down intact xylan, Whitehead reported.

The scientists envision that the genetically modified BTX organism would be introduced into the cow’s rumen by adding the organism to the animal’s feed. Once established in the rumen, they hope the bacterium will increase overall xylan digestion, resulting in more efficient use of feed by the animal.

Whitehead and fellow microbiologist Michael A. Cotta developed BTX. Both work at the ARS National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research Peoria, Ill.

BTX resulted from changing the genetic makeup of *Bacteroides thetaiotaomicron*, which is the bacterium found in the human colon. Whitehead obtained the research bacterium from Abigail Salyers, a professor of microbiology at the University of Illinois (Urbana).

To produce BTX, Whitehead first isolated a gene from *B. ruminicola*, a natural bacterium in the cow’s rumen. This gene prompts production of an enzyme called xylanase that breaks down xylan. He inserted the *B. ruminicola* gene into the chromosome of *B. thetaiotaomicron*, using a type genetic “carrier” called a plasmid. The end product of that insertion was the BTX organism.

Whitehead and Cotta work under interesting conditions at the Peoria lab. Because oxygen has a toxic effect on the anaerobic organisms, much of their work must be carried out in a cylindrical-shaped plastic bubble. The scientists insert their gloved hands into the plastic bubble to work in the absence of oxygen.

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Issued: October 23, 1991

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## PRIVATE EXPORTERS REPORT SALES ACTIVITY FOR USSR

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23—Private exporters today reported to the U.S. Department of Agriculture export sales of 925,000 metric tons of wheat (560,000 tons of hard red winter and 365,000 tons of hard red spring) for delivery to the USSR during the 1991-92 marketing year and under the first year of the Long Term Grain Supply Agreement signed June 1, 1990.

The marketing year for wheat began June 1.

Sales of wheat and corn for delivery to the USSR during the first year (Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 1991) now total 14,000,900 tons, of which wheat is 3,745,100 and corn is 10,255,800 tons. In addition, sales of soybeans total 834,200 tons and soybean meal total 2,278,800 tons.

USDA issues both daily and weekly export sales reports to the public. Exporters are required to report to USDA export sales of 100,000 metric tons or more of one commodity made in one day, to one destination by 3:00 P.M. eastern time on the next business day following the sale. Export sales of less than these quantities must be reported to USDA on a weekly basis.

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